

# Letters to the Tribune's Editor

I wholly disapprove of what you say and will defend to the death your right to say it.—Voltaire to Helvetius.

Taxing Autos for Roads  
Tariff and High Prices

Fort Washington  
Open Air Theaters

## The Last of Fort Washington

### Why One Would Not Keep Its Memory Green— Heart-breaking Episode of the Revolution

To the Editor of The Tribune:  
Sir: There are more relevant facts that should be stated in connection with the surrender of Fort Washington than were given in my letter published in The Tribune of May 22.

Washington's army was badly beaten on Long Island and on to upper New York. It was a masterly retreat. Aside from that the successful little engagement on Harlem Heights was the only redeeming feature in several days of fighting and hurried marching. A month later General Howe's well executed flank movement forced Washington to move the main part of his army to the vicinity of White Plains. He left a strong garrison in the fort, which, with its outposts, was well prepared for defense.

Washington, of course, could not foresee that he would be beaten at White Plains and forced to retreat up the Hudson or to take his army across the river. He was defeated and decided to cross over to New Jersey. This left Fort Washington and its outposts unsupported and subject to an early attack by General Howe's army, consisting of more than 20,000 veteran troops.

At this juncture Washington felt obliged personally to inspect the important posts in the Highlands of the Hudson and to confer with the officers in command of them. While he feared that the British might attack the fort, he expected to return in time to consider the question whether it ought to be evacuated. General Greene, who was left in charge of the American forces across the river, was given discretionary authority as to the withdrawal of the garrison. Washington was in favor of its evacuation, but had great confidence in General Greene's judgment.

On his return a few days later he found that General Howe was preparing for an attack. But there was still time for the withdrawal of the garrison in safety, which Washington thought should be done. General Greene and Colonel Magaw, the commander of the garrison, were so strongly of the opinion, however, that the fort could be successfully defended that Washington finally yielded, but with grave and painful doubts and reluctance. At the time of the final decision he is said to have "trembled with nervous excitement." His judgment—a sound and should have prevailed.

The garrison remained in the fort and the vital moment passed. Howe's forces soon attacked. Washington was at Fort Lee with his army in hand, gazing across the river in the direction of the fort. He heard the firing of the enemy and that of our outposts, and noticed the progress of the assault by the ascending volume of smoke. He finally saw the flag of the fort hauled down and the British colors take its place. It is related that he showed much emotion, weeping like a child. When it was too late he recalled his mistake, which proved to be the greatest one of his mindless life.

If Colonel Magaw's splendid reply to General Howe's first summons to surrender, namely: "Actuated by the most glorious cause that mankind ever fought in, I am determined to defend this post to the very last extremity," had only been carried into action how different the result would have been! But it was not. Not a gun was fired from the fort. It made no defense whatever.

Granting that Greene and Magaw were wrong, that Washington should have relied upon his own judgment instead of upon theirs; that the fort, standing alone on the island, without the possibility of support and open to attack by a large and ably commanded army, should have been abandoned as soon as Washington's army crossed the Hudson, yet there was undoubtedly some ground for hope that it could and would hold out. It was a strong, new fortress, with a garrison of more than 2,500 soldiers. It contained twenty large mounted cannon, an ample number of field pieces and an abundance of small arms, ammunition and supplies of every kind. Had its resources been used to the best advantage its resistance might have proved successful.

It is stated that when the outposts were captured the troops that had bravely defended them all retreated and were gathered together inside the main fort, making the number of men too great for the efficient action of all, and that many of the troops became demoralized and refused to man the guns. There is ground for the belief that these men lost their confidence in Colonel Magaw, realizing that he was unequal to the emergency. He was a colonel of militia and comparatively unknown. If either General Montgomery, Anthony Wayne, Colonel Stark, Colonel Glover or young Alexander Hamilton had been in his place how different the result probably would have been!

Then the surplus troops would undoubtedly have been posted at different points on the outside of the fort in the surrounding woods, instructed to fight in Indian fashion, lying on the ground among the trees, protected by the cannon fire from the parapets behind and high above them. All the great cannon and field artillery would have been brought into full action and there would have been a constant discharge from rifles and muskets. Great havoc would have been wrought in the enemy's ranks. Even then the fort might have been captured, but if it had yielded these surely would have been a broken red belt composed of thousands of dead and wounded British soldiers around it.

Then it would have been recorded as

## Open Air Park Theaters

### Example of St. Louis Suggested for New York to Emulate

To the Editor of The Tribune:  
Sir: The outstanding feature of the recent meeting of the American Medical Association at St. Louis, aside from its scientific sessions, was an entertainment given to the members in the Municipal Open Air Theater in Forest Park. The entertainment, consisting of songs and dances by pupils of various dancing schools in St. Louis, was far better than one would expect from amateurs; indeed, until I was told that they were pupils of dancing schools I supposed they were professional performers, such as one sees on the best vaudeville stages.

It was, however, the environment, the amphitheater holding an audience of 10,000, arranged on the slope of a hill, the rear seats 225 feet behind and fifty feet above the level of the orchestra pit, the stage 120 feet wide and ninety feet deep, flanked by two great trees and backed by the dark green foliage of the woods in Forest Park, the artistic lighting effects, all in the open air beneath a star-laden sky, the faint ensemble, that made a profound impression of scenic beauty upon the visitors.

Why cannot New York City have one or more such open-air theaters in its parks? There are locations in Central Park, Bronx Park, Clermont Park, Van Cortlandt Park and Prospect Park suitable for this purpose. Public community concerts are occasionally given in Central Park, and amateur musical organizations give performances there. The cost of such an open-air theater would be small and there would not be the damage to lawns that occurs at the community concerts. Nor need there be much expense for talent. At the A. M. A. entertainment the excellent soloist volunteered her services and the dancing schools contended for a place on the program. In this city, with its multiplicity of dancing schools, singing schools, community chorus classes, dramatic schools and amateur dramatic and musical organizations, it should not be difficult to secure the cooperation of some of these who would give public performances in such a theater.

In the St. Louis open air theater the performances consist of grand opera, light opera, choral concerts, drama and Greek games and, on exceptional occasions, such entertainments as the St. Louis Medical Society provided for its visitors. There is no place in this city where such outdoor performances can be given except at the Stadium, and this cannot be compared with the St. Louis Open Air Theater either from the aesthetic or from the acoustic side. The City of St. Louis maintains a municipal opera school, from which the chorus for the concerts and operas is recruited.

I hope the suggestion embodied in this letter will be brought to the attention of the Department of Parks and acted upon. I. L. NASCHER.  
New York, June 22, 1922.

### Applause in the Theater

To the Editor of The Tribune:  
Sir: Richard Barthelmess, in a recent letter to The Tribune, states that in his opinion applause in a theater is to be attributed to the art of the actor rather than to the intelligence of the audience, as stated by Joseph Stantley. For my part (and I have talked to many about this discussion) I believe both Mr. Barthelmess and Mr. Stantley are wide of the mark.

Applause in a theater or any other place is the result of personal appeal. Take any audience as an example, and you will find that what appeals to one person will make no impression on another, and yet both persons may be highly intelligent and the actor who is playing before them as highly artistic.

I know a college professor who is terribly bored at a performance of Shakespeare or Ibsen, but let a comedian in a musical comedy hit another comedian with the personal slapstick and this finely educated man will almost fall out of his seat with explosive laughter. I am sure Mr. Stantley would not say this gentleman is not intelligent, nor would Mr. Barthelmess attribute his appreciation to the "art" of the actor. It is simply that low comedy or wholesome buffoonery appeals to this particular man when he attends the theater, and he will invariably applaud and laugh when thus actuated. J. C. MIDDLETON.  
New York, June 21, 1922.

### The Flag of the Regiment

To the Editor of The Tribune:  
Sir: A recent controversy regarding the proper hanging of our flag; to each regiment in the service is issued a national flag and on it is inscribed the official number of the regiment, together with the names of battles, if any, in which the regiment has participated. Such inscription naturally constitutes a face, and invariably the union is to the left on this face when the flag is flown or hung horizontally and to the right when hung vertically, so the inscription may be read. To secure uniformity in display all unscrubbed flags should be hung in like manner without regard to the points of the compass. Q. E. D.  
East Orange, N. J., June 20, 1922.

## Who's to Pay for the Roads?

### Argument for Graduated Tax at Source on Automobiles —Based on Wear and Tear

To the Editor of The Tribune:

Sir: Does not your recent editorial on the regulation of truck traffic present a problem rather than solve it? By all means, let us regulate this heavy freight motor traffic supplied by public funds with a roadway which it uses up as speedily and carelessly as could be expected when it pays little or nothing toward the upkeep of the road. If, as you say, "extension of existing road facilities" is the thing to be done, is not the problem how this is to be done? How build and finance these additional facilities?

No lasting or satisfactory pavement certainly no cheap one—for the present heavy auto and truck traffic seems yet to have been discovered, if one may draw conclusions from the frequency with which our roads are ripped up for new paving and traffic thrown into confusion thereby, to say nothing of the inconvenience to the unfortunate communities dwelling along these roads while they are being reconstructed. Even the minor problem as to how to reconstruct a road and keep on using it at the same time, as railroads do, is still unsolved. I speak with feeling on this phase of road building, as the street which passes my home, on one of the main highways of New Jersey, has been in process of reconstruction for the past year.

But leaving the problem of construction to the engineering profession in the faith that it has others of greater difficulty, what about the financing of this road extension policy? Will those who use the roads pay for them, as in the case of the railroads, or will the public pocketbook pay? Are the residents of New Jersey to provide roads for through traffic from Pennsylvania and the West to New York, and the residents of Connecticut to provide roads for traffic from Boston to New York—traffic in which they have no interest except as it jags the foundations of their homes as it passes?

Some roads are to be constructed by Federal aid, but that, of course, does not mean that nobody pays for them. "America's Billion Dollar Industry" is the title of an article in "Harper's Magazine" dealing with some of our wonderful highways. What I want to know is where the billion is to come from. Not only this billion, but many others will be needed.

As I understand the Federal aid idea, the national government will equal what certain states spend on certain roads up to a given amount, \$75,000,000, I believe, but this will be only a drop in the bucket to the total amount which will probably be spent in the next ten years. Will we have further stamp taxes, theater taxes, income taxes, excess profits taxes, etc., to raise the money for this road building policy? Who will say that our taxes of various kinds are not now as high as the traffic will bear? Will it be another levy on all for the benefit of those who use the roads? It may be argued that transportation and communication, like public schools, are in the interest of all, but not equally so. I maintain, or else why should not the railroads be supplied with their facilities from the public treasury? They also are in the business of transportation.

Is it not a fair policy for the users of the roads to pay for them in proportion to their use? Of course it would be difficult to estimate the use of a road by any particular car, unless we re-establish the old tollgate with all its inconveniences, but not more difficult to estimate than other things which have been satisfactorily estimated, as evidence the life insurance business so successfully built up by estimates of the length of human life. Would it be more difficult to estimate the life of a motor truck, touring car or Ford roadster? and on that estimate levy a tax at the source, that is, at the manufacturer's, sufficient to pay for the potential use of the road by any particular car, and thus in the beginning collect the money needed to supply that car with a good road? Some of our recent taxing legislation ought to have accustomed us to the payment-at-the-source system of collection. This would of course add to the price of motor cars, but those who want them will have them just the same, and the burden should fall where it belongs, on those who use the roads. As applied to motor trucks, the tax being paid on the purchase of a motor truck would add to the capital needed to carry on a motor-trucking business, and in order to make a profit rates would have to be charged high enough to cover this additional capital, and thus it seems to me, the tax would ultimately be distributed among the users of the road.

Such a tax should be a Federal tax, for a car might never be used in the state in which it was manufactured, and a state like Michigan, in which so many cars are manufactured, if it levied such a tax, would probably collect a great deal more than it needed for its own roads. State license taxes to some extent may contribute to the upkeep of the roads, but it is doubtful if they ever meet the whole bill, and the difficulty of collecting an adequate amount from cars of other states without running up against the Federal Constitution on the ground of interference with interstate commerce would be considerable.

Possibly such a tax would be deemed a defeat before it even had the chance of becoming a law. Certainly it would not be popular with the powerful automobile industry and its numerous customers who probably believe themselves already much over-taxed. However, they ought to be more willing to pay a tax from which they would derive an immediate benefit in the way of improved roads. Under the present Federal law there is a tax of 3 per cent on the sale of motor trucks by the manufacturer, and 1 per cent on other automobiles. The difference, if founded on any reason, is probably because trucks are used for business purposes and other automobiles supposedly for pleasure. Obviously it is not based on any intention to make either kind of car pay for the roads in proportion to their use.

The gasoline consumption tax in force in some states might be a valuable aid to raise funds for road building.

ing and maintenance, but it seems doubtful if it alone would be adequate, for any device for measuring the gas probably could be manipulated by a skillful and unscrupulous mechanic to suit his needs, and we would have another instance of a tax paid by the honest man and evaded by the dishonest. It would seem that we already have enough taxes of this kind. GRACE HAMBLEN.  
Chatham, N. J., June 19, 1922.

## Objection to "Star Spangled"

To the Editor of The Tribune:  
Sir: The "Star Spangled Banner" is, without exception, the most undignified epithet ever used to designate a national ensign. When such a title is affixed to the Stars and Stripes, our nation's emblem, it is simply preposterous. To term "Good Old Glory" a "spangled banner" is a misnomer. To designate the celestial stars as paltry bits of tinzel is nothing short of sacrilege. The stars in our flag represent the different states, which of the states would like to be designated as a "bit of tinzel"? Spangles are mere particles of glittering metal of practically no intrinsic value. The stars are eternal and the stripes in the United States flag are rays of light to enlighten the universe. AN AMERICAN OF WASHINGTON  
AND LINCOLN TYPE.  
New York, June 22, 1922.

## An Improbable Need

(From The Toledo Blade)  
Mr. Hearst says he has no ambition to go into politics unless there is some special need. That is our attitude exactly. Furthermore, we feel absolutely certain there is never going to be any special need.

## A Sign of Conversion

(From The Kansas City Star)  
The Bolsheviks started out with the announcement that they didn't believe in money. So it's really a great concession that they are willing to borrow from anybody that will lend to them.

## The Latest Type

(From The Springfield Republic)  
The headline writers have coined the new word "bucketeers." It sounds a good deal like buccannere and has a good deal the same meaning.

## Excessive Tariff

### If France Can't Export to America How Can She Buy?

To the Editor of The Tribune:  
Sir: Voltaire once said: "I can take care of my enemies, but who will protect me from my friends?"

This boutade comes to mind as we examine the proposed new tariff. With a sincere desire to see America the pilot of the world commerce, a number of American statesmen are at this time pursuing a campaign leading to what may be justly called an excessive tariff. We do not challenge the good faith of these men, but we are permitted to state that, should their views prevail and become the law of the land, the result would be as detrimental to the United States as to foreign countries.

Stripped of all unnecessary verbiage, excessive tariff means high prices and high prices do not always make for prosperity.

It is a well known fact that the expression "protective tariff" is misleading. Like Shakespeare's "The lady doth protest too much, methinks," we believe that there is an exaggeration in overprotecting certain products which need no protection.

Take as a modest illustration certain grades of kid gloves which cannot be made in our country. What is there to protect in this case? It is difficult to realize the why and wherefores of a protection which has nothing to protect.

Is such an increase justified? Does any fair-minded person deny that the purpose of such protection is a mere play to the galleries, as the saying goes? Will not the opponents of the present Administration claim that the guiding spirit in the proposed legislation is backed by political motives?

It is in a friendly spirit and fully conscious of our duty to America that we are jotting down these words. We want the United States to be prosperous, but not artificially so. Without being accused of pessimism, may we not propound this question?

If the American tariff prevents, as it unquestionably will, if adopted by the Senate, the importation from France that country will in turn find it impossible to buy of America its petroleum, grains, tobacco, cotton, agricultural machines, etc., not having the necessary equivalent to pay for same.

Where, then, in all fairness, is America's advantage under the circumstances?

Leaving aside all questions of tariff, what is the advantage of a tariff? But fairness requires that France be put in a position to pay in merchandise for purchases made by her in our country. EMILK UZARD,  
President Franco-American Board of Commerce and Industry.  
New York, June 22, 1922.

## Two Broken Laws

To the Editor of The Tribune:  
Sir: When laws are generally approved of and ignored they might as well be repealed, and when they are actually productive of the very conditions they are intended to prevent they should be wiped off the statute books with all possible speed. We have such laws in force today in the United States and the Sullivan law.

The effect of the former has been that people have learned to make and are making and using alcoholic beverages all over the country, despite the fact for obvious reasons, and therefore have not been so greatly deterred which have from being published.

As to the Sullivan law, it is observed only by law-abiding citizens who ought to have, but are thereby deprived of, the power to protect their persons, their homes and their families from attack by thugs and hooligans, generally well armed with modern weapons, the Sullivan law to the contrary notwithstanding.

That the Volstead act and the Sullivan law should both be repealed, therefore the opinion of many, including LIBERTAL.  
New York, June 20, 1922.

## Just as Usual

(From The Atlantic City Press)  
"What will become of our young people?" wails a reformer. Oh, they'll grow old and warty about the young people.

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